

1/24/18

Dear Commissioner,

The ability to effectively communicate with the world outside of your home is of the utmost importance. It is for this reason that I support a robust *Lifeline* program and I urge you to reject the proposals to decimate the program which are currently before you.

The *Lifeline* program was initiated in 1985 by President Ronald Reagan to help bring telecommunication capabilities to all Americans and to provide subsidized basic phone service for low-income consumers. *Lifeline* is a program that has worked: the percentage of low-income households with phone service has increased from 80% in 1985, when *Lifeline* began, to nearly 92% in 2011. In 2005 the *Lifeline* program was expanded by President George W. Bush to include wireless service. Beginning in December, 2017, the *Lifeline* program was scheduled to transition from telephone-only to include broadband internet services within a five-year period. The expansion to broadband would have helped these low-income Americans not only stay in touch, it would have helped close the digital divide.

The typical *Lifeline* subscriber makes just \$14,000 per year; currently, nearly 13 million low-income Americans use *Lifeline*. It is because of *Lifeline* that more American seniors can call their loved ones, neighbors, or emergency services in the event of a mishap. *Lifeline* allows subscribers to speak with their child's educators. It is because of *Lifeline* that workers can stay on top of their fulltime, or multiple part-time, shift schedules. *Lifeline* has enabled Veterans to access the health, educational, and financial benefits to which they are entitled. For low-income families, a telephone is a key connection to education and economic opportunities, and safety during times of emergencies.

Current proposals would harm the Lifeline program by:

- eliminating service for approximately 75 percent of current participants, particularly mobile services;
- restricting voice service support to only low-income households in rural areas;
- install a lifetime cap on *Lifeline* recipients;
- place an overall budget cap on the *Lifeline* program; and

Please act to protect Lifeline and reject these draconian proposals. I urge you to further promote Lifeline so that all Americans may have access to communication. Thank you for hearing my views.

Sincerely,

Dustin De Vincentis